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Hill announces annual Prescription Drug Abuse Symposium

By Rob Burgess

rburgess@ibj.com

The office of Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill has announced the ninth annual Prescription Drug Abuse Symposium for later this year.

William McCleery, deputy communications director, said the focus of the symposium is to provide an atmosphere for frank, candid discussion about substance abuse and addiction.

“The symposium will provide a forum to present solutions to this growing crisis,” he said. “The hope is to bridge the gap that often exists between the law enforcement and healthcare communities and provide these groups an opportunity to interact and discuss the issues.”

McCleery said the list of speakers has yet to be finalized.

“The goal is to bring the nation’s top experts in substance abuse treatment, drug enforcement and drug abuse prevention to share their innovative ideas,” he said.

One idea that won’t be touted at the conference, however, will be marijuana.

While Indiana is not yet one of the 29 states and Washington, D.C. that have legalized medical or recreational marijuana, those that have experienced a sharp drop in opioid-related hospitalizations. A study published in the April 1, 2017 edition of Alcohol and Drug Dependence found a 23 percent reduction in opioid abuse and a 13 percent drop in overdoses in those states. McCleery instead pointed to a speaker at last year's symposium — Tom Gorman, director of the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program — who spoke about “the failure of the ‘Colorado experiment’ and how legalized marijuana has led to significant harm.”

“This conversation will certainly continue as we look at the pitfalls to marijuana legalization that Indiana should avoid,” said McCleery.

A full day of conferences is being scheduled for Oct. 29, which will continue through half the day Oct. 30. Hotel and conference registration opens July 1 at the Embassy Suites in Noblesville.

The conference is set to include continuing legal education, continuing medical education, continuing education unit, local education training board and accreditation council for pharmacy education credits, pending approval.